

IN THE CLAIMS

CLAIM 1 (Currently Amended) A computer-based method for use in an electronic business service environment, the method comprising the steps of:

constructing an electronic service contract between at least two primary parties, wherein the primary parties comprise a service provider and a service customer, and wherein the electronic service contract includes specifications for configuration by the primary parties and by at least one sponsored party, the specifications including network performance goals modifiable by any one of the primary parties or the at least one sponsored party; and

deploying the electronic service contract to at least one of the parties for configuring a service in accordance with specifications in the electronic service contract.

CLAIM 2 (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein one of the primary parties sponsors the at least one sponsored party.

CLAIM 3 (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of executing the constructed electronic service contract.

CLAIM 4 (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the electronic service contract is one of monitored, enforced and managed by at least one sponsored party.

CLAIM 5 (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one sponsored party is a business entity that is distinct from the primary parties.

CLAIM 6 (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic service contract comprises one or more service level agreements.

CLAIM 7 (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the one or more service level agreements are deployed to the at least one sponsored party for monitoring in accordance with instructions defined in the electronic service contract.

CLAIM 8 (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein one or more primary parties is notified by the at least one sponsored party in response to a violation of a portion of the electronic service contract.

CLAIM 9 (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of outsourcing at least a portion of the tasks associated with the execution of the service.

CLAIM 10 (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein at least one task associated with measuring, monitoring and managing the electronic service contract is outsourced to the at least one sponsored party.

CLAIM 11 (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the at least one sponsored party is at least an additional service provider.

CLAIM 12 (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the primary parties comprise the service provider, the service customer, and at least one additional entity in a multi-party electronic service contract.

CLAIM 13 (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of deploying the electronic service contract further comprises the step of setting up a contract monitoring and management infrastructure.

CLAIM 14 (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of maintaining information on system configuration.

CLAIM 15 (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of detecting whether a violation of a least a portion of the contract occurs and proposing corrective actions to a management component.

CLAIM 16 (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising enforcing corrective actions in accordance with specifications in the electronic service contract.

CLAIM 17 (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the corrective actions are enforced in response to input associated with a violation detection component.

CLAIM 18 (Currently Amended) Apparatus for use in an electronic business service environment, the apparatus comprising at least one processor operative to:

construct an electronic service contract between at least two primary parties, wherein the primary parties comprise a service provider and a service customer, and wherein the electronic service contract includes specifications for configuration by the primary parties and by at least one sponsored party, the specifications including network performance goals modifiable by any one of the primary parties or the at least one sponsored party; and

provide for deployment of the electronic service contract to at least one of the parties for configuring a service in accordance with specifications in the electronic service contract.

CLAIM 19 (Original) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein one of the primary parties to the contract sponsors the at least one sponsored party.

CLAIM 20 (Original) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the at least one processor is further operative to execute the constructed electronic service contract.

CLAIM 21 (Original) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein at least a portion of the electronic service contract is one of monitored, enforced and managed by at least one sponsored party.

CLAIM 22 (Original) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the at least one sponsored party is a business entity that is distinct from the primary parties.

CLAIM 23 (Original) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the electronic service contract comprises one or more service level agreements.

CLAIM 24 (Original) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the one or more service level agreements are deployed to the at least one sponsored party for monitoring in accordance with instructions defined in the electronic service contract.

CLAIM 25 (Original) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the at least one processor is further operative to provide a notice to one or more primary parties from the at least one sponsored party in response to a violation of a portion of the electronic service contract.

CLAIM 26 (Original) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the at least one processor is further operative to outsource at least a portion of the tasks associated with the execution of the electronic service contract.

CLAIM 27 (Original) The apparatus of claim 26, wherein the at least a portion of the tasks associated with the execution of the electronic service contract are outsourced to the at least one sponsored party.

CLAIM 28 (Original) The apparatus of claim 27, wherein the at least one sponsored party is at least an additional service provider.

CLAIM 29 (Original) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the primary parties comprise the service provider, the service customer, and at least one additional entity in a multi-party electronic service contract.

CLAIM 30 (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture for use in an electronic business service environment, comprising a machine readable medium containing one or more programs which when executed implement the steps of:

constructing an electronic service contract between at least two primary parties, wherein the primary parties comprise a service provider and a service customer, and wherein the electronic service contract includes specifications for configuration by the primary parties and by at least one sponsored party, the specifications including network performance goals modifiable by any one of the primary parties or the at least one sponsored party; and

deploying the electronic service contract to at least one of the parties for configuring a service in accordance with specifications in the electronic service contract.

CLAIM 31 (Currently Amended) A computer-based system for use in an electronic business service environment, the system comprising:

a contract building component for constructing an electronic service contract between at least two primary parties, wherein the primary parties comprise a service provider and a service customer, and wherein the electronic service contract includes specifications for configuration by the primary parties and by at least one sponsored party, the specifications including network performance goals modifiable by any one of the primary parties or the at least one sponsored party;

a deployment component for deploying the electronic service contract to at least one of the parties for configuring a service in accordance with specifications in the electronic service contract;

a measurement component for maintaining information on system configuration;

a violation detection component for at least one of detecting whether a violation of at least a portion of the contract occurs and proposing corrective actions to a management component; and

a management component for enforcing corrective actions in accordance with specifications in the electronic service contract.